

WASHINGTON POST
13 March 1985ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE F-14**JACK ANDERSON**

Saudis Ruled by a Dissolute House

Our diplomats tend to view Saudi Arabia's royal family through rose-tinted lenses, which soften the raw intelligence coming into the State Department.

But I've had access to uncensored reports on the royal princes, who have ruled Saudi Arabia since the first oil well was tapped—and have enriched themselves beyond the dreams of Croesus.

These reports portray King Fahd as a kindly but wary political manipulator with no visions for the future of his strategic domain, and no cause except the protection of his family inheritance and the perpetuation of a benighted religious sect.

He presides over a government of princes chronically distracted with lining their pockets. The report uses such phrases as "unsavory reputations" and "degenerate personalities" to describe them.

With help from Steven Emerson, a former congressional investigator, I have learned what the intelligence reports say about the ruling family.

Some of my information is taken from a book Emerson is completing, "The American House of Saud," which will be published by Franklin Watts Inc. My associate Lucette Lagnado also dug up details about the corruption of the Saudi royalty.

The State Department reports on Saudi Arabia invariably are excerpted and watered down before released to Congress and the public. Typical is a secret report prepared in 1980 by David Long, a preeminent State Department expert on Arab affairs. A sanitized version of the report, published by the Georgetown Center for Strategic Studies with a grant from a company that did business with the Saudis, turned up on Capitol Hill.

Emerson compared the Georgetown version with the original report, which is classified "secret." Here are a few juicy statements that were left out of the public report:

- The original report speaks of "corrupt practices," "conspicuous consumption" and "high-spending life styles in the watering spots of Europe and America." This "has served to undermine the reputation for strict Wahhabi integrity which has over the years been a hallmark of the regime."

- There are references to "personal degeneracy and moral corruption among members of the royal family, particularly the younger princes." This has been "accompanied by . . . arrogance of power devoid of a sense of responsibility," which "has grated mightily on many Saudis."

- Of the estimated 3,000 Saudi princes, the secret report states that "many, such as the sons of [King] Fahd, have unsavory reputations for sharp business dealings and for degenerate personalities." In the public version of Long's report, Fahd is not named, and the phrases "unsavory reputations" and "degenerate personalities" were scissored out.

- Fahd himself is described in unflattering terms in the secret report. He is "a thoroughly political animal," it says, adding: "By temperament, he is kindly and goes to inordinate lengths to avoid offending anyone. The result of his constant search for consensus has been indecisiveness . . ."

Footnote: Long, the author of the classified report, would not comment. Jack Shaw, who helped prepare the public report, argued that differences between the public and classified versions were irrelevant because the conclusions were identical.